

Winston-Salem CHOICE Neighborhood Initiative (CNI)

Summary of The Neighborhood Engagement Process

There has been extensive neighborhood engagement of residents throughout the Winston-Salem Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Planning and Implementation Grant, which began in 2013 and will continue throughout the FY 2019 grant period to 2026. This has been in accordance with section 24(e)(2)(d) of the 1937 act, stating that residents must be involved at both the beginning and during the planning process for the transformation program. (See Exhibit 1)

As a result of the awarded FY2013 CHOICE Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Grant, the housing authority and its partners, which included Cleveland Avenue Homes (CAH) residents and public and private stakeholders, developed a Transformation Plan for the neighborhood. HUD accepted the final Transformation Plan on July 14, 2016.

In preparation for the FY 2019 CNI application, HAWS, the City of Winston-Salem (City), Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI), McCormack Baron Salazar (MBS), and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (school district) – known collectively as the implementation team – worked to update the 2016 Transformation Plan in response to ongoing development activities in the neighborhood and to reflect current market realities. In updating the plan, the implementation team has engaged CAH public housing residents, community residents, and other critical stakeholders including: the City, USI, MBS, the school district, political representatives, surrounding neighbors, local foundations, the Minister’s Conference, Daymark Recovery, Forsyth County Public Library, Smart State, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Childcare Resource Center, Women Infant Children Nutrition, Crosby Scholars, YMCA, Big Brother Big Sisters, Parenting Path, Salvation Army, Foundations for Early Learning Center, Minister’s Conference, American Communities Trust, United Way, and a myriad of other local stakeholders described throughout this application.

For the FY 2019 CNI application, the implementation team held a multiple-day design workshop, listening sessions, and plan review meetings. Included in these meetings were two resident-only meetings and two public community meetings. In total, over 20 meetings were held and attended by over 200 residents from CAH, neighborhood residents, including the neighborhood association, service providers, housing and neighborhood advocates, business interests, and stakeholders. Input from these participants informed every part of the plan.

Below is the schedule of meetings that were implemented to engage residents and allow for community input in the CNI process: (See Exhibit 2 for Meeting Agenda)

- 2 resident listening sessions - Tuesday, Sept. 17th & Tuesday, Sept. 24th, 2019
- 1 community listening session - Tuesday, Sept. 24th (evening)
- 5 partner meetings - one on Tuesday, Sept. 24th and four on Wednesday, Sept. 25th
- 1 community open house - Wednesday, Sept. 25th, 2019

- 1 Resident Cookout - Tuesday, Sept. 24th, 2019
- 1 Final Community Presentation/Discussion - Thursday, Sept. 26th

A door-to-door implementation survey was conducted in September 2019 in order to reach all residents, including those who are not typically involved in community planning. . There was a 98% response rate from the door-to-door survey. The confidential survey introduced the CNI project and asked residents a variety of questions such as, “are they satisfied with their current housing, what improvements would they like to see”, etc.

Starting on November 24, 2020, regular monthly community meetings are held via Zoom (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) by the project team which includes the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem, the City of Winston-Salem, McCormack Baron, and Urban Strategies. The meetings are open to the public and are held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 3:30pm-5:00pm est. The main agenda for every meeting is for the team to report on the progress on the Housing, Neighborhood and People component of the project. The meetings also include special announcements of community wide events, announcements of historical facts, and an opportunity for residents to get to provide feedback and ask questions. The communication methods are tailored to meet the language and accessibility needs of the residents and include such tools as flyers, direct mailings, text messages, phone call and social media posts as strategies for outreach and engagement with the community.

A website was created during the planning grant (2013-2016) to provide residents and stakeholders with plan information, data, resources, photos, renderings, and event/meeting dates. Material on the website connects residents with other stakeholders and generates support and interest in the community for the Transformation Plan and implemented programs.

In May 2021, a new website was launched, courb.co/wscni. As with the original website, every aspect of the project is posted. Residents have been invited to subscribe so that whenever there is new information added to the website, they receive a notification either via e-mail or text with the update. The website is accessible not only on a computer/laptop, but also on smartphone platforms. Residents and other members of the community are able to ask questions on the site and it is regularly monitored so that responses to questions are provided within 3 hours.

Lastly, the City of Winston-Salem launched Front Door Fridays on 5/28/2021. On Front Door Fridays, City staff canvas the neighborhood, meeting with residents and other members of the community to talk about the CNI neighborhood effort. They make sure the community is educated about the project and they “listen” and receive active feedback from the community. The goal is to continue Front Door Fridays throughout the life of the project.

Exhibit 3 – Photos from September 2019 resident community meeting

